on and chatted for just a moment or two.

It was a tough assignment. They were no longer showing up at 2 p.m. in the afternoon as usual but sometimes 7 and 8 o'clock at night. They kept up with their responsibility.

I say that because I want to preface these remarks by letting everyone know that I am proud of the Postal Service. I will fight to keep it in business serving America, and I know that it is going through extreme hardship at the present time.

But 2 nights ago, I was on a town meeting call with Alderman Leslie Hairston of the Fifth Ward in Chicago. She asked me to come on the call because of the problems that she is having in the Hyde Park area. She wanted me to hear some of the situations that they were facing in the Fifth Ward.

The U.S. Postal Service, unfortunately, is a lifeline that is being threatened at the current time. So many people in Chicago and all across the country depend on it for regular, prompt mail service to deliver everything from birthday cards to bills, cards, checks, and medicine. Yet, for months now, mail delivery has been slow and unpredictable for millions of Americans.

I have heard from many Chicago-area residents, just like I heard the other night, and small businesses that have gone upwards of a month—a month—without the delivery of mail. These delays are having a devastating impact on the lives of families in my State.

One Chicago man said that after receiving no mail for 3 weeks, he went to the local post office to check where his mail was. He waited in line for 6 hours before he finally was given his mail. Another woman wrote me that she worries that missing bills will hurt her credit rating, making it even harder for her to make ends meet. Another woman wrote that she worries that missing bills will hurt not only her credit rating but could hurt her personally by denying basic prescriptions and medicine that she counts on. Small business owners are losing customers because their mail-order deliveries are delayed or just flat disappear.

But this vivid example that brings these together is the story of Ms. Carmella McCoy Gonzalez. She has a disability. She is unable to travel really much outside her home—restrictions that have become even more constraining during the pandemic. Ms. McCoy Gonzalez suffers from high blood pressure and a heart condition, making her regular delivery of medication essential. However, she reports that for the past few months, she and her neighbors are lucky if they get mail delivered one day a week. She told my office that a shipment of medicine sent on February 8 didn't reach her home until February 23, while others just simply didn't arrive at all.

When they reached out to the local post office, they were told that they wouldn't be getting any mail because there weren't enough carriers to deliver it. In fact, a report from the Postal Service Office of the Inspector General in early February found that the reason there weren't enough postal carriers to deliver the mail is that the administrators just hadn't bothered removing the names of employees who no longer worked there. This meant they weren't able to bring in additional staff when needed to deliver a growing backlog of delayed mail.

The report noted that more than 60,000—60,000—pieces of mail had been delayed in Chicago neighborhoods over a period of several weeks. These delays are not new, and they are certainly not confined to Chicago. U.S. Postal Service customers in many States have endured delays and other problems with mail service for months. Veterans are going without medication that has been mailed to them from the VA. Small businesses are missing delivery dates. Families are missing paychecks and not receiving notices of premiums due in time.

Timely, reliable mail delivery is always important, and it is especially critical now. Receiving medications and other important deliveries enables people to stay safely at home rather than to venturing out and risking COVID infections.

Regular mail service helps sustain the economy during an unprecedented public health crisis by providing a low-cost shipping option for small businesses that are struggling to survive. Yet, rather than focusing on how to fix the current delivery delays, U.S. Postal Service leaders are now considering changes that could result in higher prices and even more delays. This is no plan to fix the Postal Service; it is a plan to sabotage the Postal Service in order to benefit its commercial competitors.

Cut service, raise prices, then lose customers because you cut services and raised prices, and then just repeat that destructive cycle again and again until there are little or no customers left—that is the plan of the Postal Service under Postmaster General DeJoy, and Congress needs to step in. We must demand that the Postmaster General implement new policies and operational changes immediately to end delivery delays in Chicago and across the country. Congress needs to ensure the Postal Service has all the resources and tools it needs to provide reliable and affordable services during this critical time and to come out of this pandemic on secure financial footing.

Our Founders understood that reliable and affordable mail service was essential to our economy and our national unity. The Postal Service is the one public service that is so important that it is actually mentioned by name in the Constitution. We cannot allow its temporary custodians, appointed by the previous administration, to kill it with a death of a thousand cuts in order to enrich private competitors, especially during this pandemic.

This situation is grave and serious. For a lot of people, the delay of a day or two in receiving mail is just an inconvenience; for others, it could be a matter of life or death literally when so many medicines are moving through the mail, prescriptions and medications that people count on for their livelihood. And it really is something that has been so fundamental in America.

We have to ask the basic question: What is going on here? I am happy to report that yesterday the Biden administration announced that they were appointing three new Governors to fill three vacancies on the Postal Board of Governors. Those vacancies have been too long in festering and creating the situation we have today.

The Postmaster General, Mr. DeJoy, who came to this position in controversy when he started suggesting he was going to delay the delivery of ballots in the previous election of November 3, is adamant that he is going to continue on his mission. We have to intervene on behalf of the people whom we represent and on behalf of this country.

I stand by the Postal Service. I believe in the men and women who make it work. And everyone I have met—certainly in my neighborhood and the ones who have been coming to my home over the years—almost became a part of the family. I knew all about their families and some of the problems and wonderful things that were happening in their lives. That was part of the experience, the postal experience, in smalltown America that we want to preserve. But when it comes to the big cities, we have to be sensitive to that as well. When massive amounts of mail are being held in trailer trucks behind the post office, not being sorted and delivered, it is just absolutely, positively unacceptable.

If COVID–19 among the workforce is one of the reasons, let's address that directly—in terms of vaccinations, No. 1; in terms of replacement employees or temporary employees, No. 2; whatever it takes to keep the Postal Service at the highest quality.

I urge my colleagues, when you go home, if you are hearing the same stories about the U.S. Postal Service, let's make this a bipartisan response. Families and businesses and vulnerable individuals across America are counting on us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

REMEMBERING MAXINE HORNER

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, in 1932, 11 years after the Tulsa Race Massacre, Maxine Horner was born in Tulsa, OK. She was Maxine Cissel at the time. She grew up in segregated Greenwood, a district recovering from the devastating effects of the massacre, just a little over a decade before.

Her parents were exceptionally protective and instructed Maxine and her siblings not to go into certain stores in

downtown Tulsa, knowing their children wouldn't be welcome. They didn't want their children to experience the pain and humiliation of being told to leave a store or to not sit at that end of the counter.

Her mother once told her, though:

Never let the color of your skin get in the way of achieving your goals. If you put your mind to it, you can do anything and be anyone.

Maxine was part of the first class to graduate from Booker T. Washington High School, which, at the time, was an all-Black school. She was proud of the education she received at Booker T. and spent 2 years studying at Wiley College before returning back to Tulsa.

She got a job working for Congressman James Jones, an opportunity that sparked some political ambitions in her. In her fifties, she returned back to school and received a bachelor's degree from Langston University in 1985. Despite being decades older than her fellow classmates and occasionally being mistaken to be the professor in her class rather than one of the other students, she finished her education.

In 1986, she ran for the Oklahoma State Senate and became one of two women to be elected for the first time into the Oklahoma State Senate as an African American.

Maxine was a true trailblazer. She worked hard for her constituents, and she championed education and the arts.

Her life was full of some poetic justice, quite frankly. She grew up in the Greenwood District in the wake of the Tulsa Race Massacre, but in the late 1990s, she sponsored the State legislation that created the Tulsa Race Riot Commission. She also cofounded the Greenwood Cultural Center. After she left office, she continued to fight for the victims of the massacre and chaired the committee overseeing the search for the burial sites—work that is still going on today.

As a young teen, she recalls going into the Tulsa Union Depot and seeing drinking fountains labeled ''Colored'' and ''White.'' But as a State senator, she sponsored the legislation that created the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame, which now occupies the old Tulsa Union Depot building, where they don't have drinking fountains labeled ''Black'' or ''Colored'' and ''White.''

As a student, she attended segregated schools. As a Senator, she championed the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program or what we now call Oklahoma's Promise—a scholarship program for low and middle-income students in Oklahoma. Oklahoma's Promise helped over 75,000 young Oklahomans pursue higher education. She left quite a legacy.

Two weeks ago, on February 8, Oklahoma lost this transformational giant. Maxine Horner passed away at the age of 88, and she will be certainly missed by her families, and she will be missed by Oklahoma.

REMEMBERING VICKI MILES-LAGRANGE

Mr. President, I did mention that in 1986 she was one of two ladies who were African American who were elected in the State senate that year—the first ladies who were African American to be elected into our State senate. The other lady was a dear friend, Vicki Miles-LaGrange. She is younger. She was born in 1953 in a segregated hospital in Oklahoma City.

She grew up in a loving home with her parents and older sister. Her parents were well-respected educators in Oklahoma City. They both got their master's degrees from the University of Oklahoma in 1955, just 7 years after Ada Lois Sipuel won her case at the Supreme Court to allow Black Oklahomans to even attend the University of Oklahoma.

As a young girl, she was interested in government. And when her friend's mother, Hannah Atkins, decided to run for the Oklahoma House of Representatives, Vicki helped out, even as a teenager. She became what they put together called Hannah's Helpers, a group of young people who campaigned for Hannah Atkins. And Atkins won her race and became the first Black female to serve in the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

Vicki attended McGuinness High School. She stayed involved in a little bit of politics there, participating in Girls State. Asking a mutual friend, Patrick McGuigan, who I am convinced had a crush on her when they were in high school—asking Patrick about that time, he recounts the stories and has written even in some of his writings about how Vicki went to Girls State and was elected governor of the Oklahoma Girls State Program that year, but when the sponsoring organization decided who they were going to send to Girls Nation, they for the first time did not send the governor; they chose to send the lieutenant governor. That is what Vicki faced as she grew up.

She attended Vassar College, and at 18 became a delegate at the Democratic Oklahoma State Convention. It was there that she met Carl Albert, who told her that if she ever ended up in DC to look him up and to come work for him. Well, that is all you would have to tell Vicki. She attended Howard University Law School, walked right into the Speaker of the House's office one day here at the Capitol and convinced Carl Albert that he should remember his offer, and she became an intern in his office immediately while she pursued her law degree.

This was not an unusual thing for Vicki. After graduating law school, she clerked for a Federal judge in Houston, joined the criminal division of the Department of Justice, where she helped prosecute Nazi war criminals.

In 1983, she decided she wanted to return to Oklahoma. So she returned, though she was rejected for an office in the U.S. Attorney's Office—ironic because later she became the U.S. attorney for the Western District. She walked right into the district attorney's office, Bob Macy's office, resume in hand, no appointment, and asked to be able to speak with him. And she waited outside of his office until he came out of his office. He came out for lunch and walked out with a job offer after that.

In 1986, she decided to run for State senate. This was the same year Maxine ran as well. Her dad, a former industrial arts teacher, helped fix up her campaign headquarters. Her mother and her mother's best friend were her campaign managers, and she won that race and unseated Senator Porter, a 22-year incumbent.

When you look at Vicki's life, there are a lot of firsts. Along with Maxine Horner, she was the first African-American female to be elected to the Oklahoma State Senate. In 1993, she became the first African-American woman to become the U.S. attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma. A year later, in 1994, President Clinton appointed her to be the U.S. district judge for the Western District of Oklahoma. She was the first African-American Federal judge among the six States that make up the Tenth Circuit of that Federal jurisdiction.

She was appointed by Chief Justice William Rehnquist in the U.S. Supreme Court as a member of the International Judicial Relations Committee of the Judicial Conference of the United States.

Shortly after, when she became a Federal judge, the horrific genocide unfolded in Rwanda. Vicki advocated for an independent judiciary in Rwanda and was part of a group of international legal experts who were sent to Rwanda to help reform the system. She made eight trips to Rwanda at her own personal risk. In 2006, she was awarded the Fern Holland Courageous Lawyer Award from the Oklahoma Bar Association.

In 2013, she was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, the highest honor an Oklahoman can receive for their contributions to the State.

She received many other awards, including the Oklahoma Bar Association's Women Trailblazer Award.

In the early 1960s, she was so inspired by President Kennedy's inaugural address that she wrote to him to say how happy she was that he was President. One of his advisers actually wrote her a letter back. She kept that letter, and, in fact, she hung it in her office while she was a judge. She was quoted as saying that, above all else, she is a career public servant. There was a newspaper article when she took her very last case in 2018 as a Federal judge, and it quoted back to 1994 when she was in front of this Senate for confirmation hearings, being the first African-American judge ever in the Tenth Circuit. And she said this:

My race will not determine my decisions.

She said: I don't want to be known as a good Black judge. I want to be a respected and good and fair judge.

Vicki Miles-LaGrange, that is exactly how we remember you.

Oklahoma is proud of these two ladies and what they have done. We are